

Remarks

The Applicant has amended the Specification and Abstract to place them into final condition for allowance. Entry into the official file is respectfully requested.

Claims 1 and 3-16 have been cancelled in favor of new Claims 17-31, respectively. New Claims 17, 26, 27 and 28 are generally modeled after Claims 1, 11, 12 and 13, respectively. However, they have been broken into paragraphs for ease of understanding. Also, all of the claims have had various portions of the previously claimed subject matter rearranged into different locations to better claim and clarify the Applicants' subject matter for which patent protection is sought.

For example, Claim 17 now recites a housing having a central bore, an outer surface and an inner surface having a tapered portion. Claim 17 also recites a layer of a relatively deformable material on at least a part of the tapered portion of the inner surface of the central bore and at least a part of the outer surface of the housing. Claim 17 further recites that the layer 1) deforms on the tapered portion of the inner surface of the central bore against an outside pipe to form a sealing arrangement and 2) has a part formed on the outer surface of an external ledge of the housing to provide a seal with a cooperating member and is continuous between the inner and outer surfaces. Similar types of changes have been made to new Claims 26, 27 and 28. Entry of all of the new claims into the official file and consideration on the merits is respectfully requested.

New Claim 32 is the same as Claim 23 except that it depends on Claim 26.

Claims 1 and 3-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102 as being anticipated by Bronner. The Applicant respectfully submits that the rejection is now moot in view of the cancellation of those claims. Nonetheless, the Applicant provides a number of comments below to assist in distinguishing new Claims 17-31 over Bronner.

Bronner fails to disclose a number of the claimed aspects depending upon which embodiment of Bronner is considered. However, there is at least one common deficiency in Bronner that runs throughout the entire disclosure. In particular, the Applicant claims a housing having an inner surface having a tapered portion. The Applicant also claims a layer of deformable material on at least a part of the tapered portion of the inner surface. The Applicant respectfully submits that Bronner fails to disclose this. Specifically, although Bronner discloses a tapered surface as helpfully mentioned by the Examiner, that tapered surface never contacts at any point the layer of deformable material. In fact, the tapered surface of Bronner is located on the opposite end of the housing from the layer of deformable material.

Reference to Figs. 1 and 3 of Bronner demonstrates this difference. In that regard, a tapered surface 16 is shown in Fig. 1 of Bronner on the left-hand portion of the housing 9. Fig. 3 shows a similar tapered surface (not numbered) on the left-hand side of housing 9. On the other hand, the layer of deformable material is located on the right-hand side of the Bronner housing and is indicated by reference number 12.

Although the right-hand portion of the housing of Bronner is different between Figs. 1 and 3, it can be seen that the layer of deformable material 12 is nonetheless located on the right-hand side of the housing 9 in both instances.

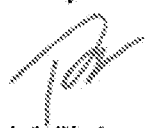
This is sharply contrasted to what the Applicant claims. The Applicant claims that the layer of relatively deformable material is on at least a part of the tapered portion of the inner surface. This is not disclosed by Bronner as readily seen by reference to both Figs. 1 and 3. Instead, the layer of deformable material 12 is in contact with a non-tapered skirt 13 of housing 9. In other words, the longitudinal axis line extending through each of Figs. 1 and 3 of Bronner is parallel to the inner and outer surfaces of skirt 13. This is sharply contrasted to a longitudinal axis extending through the

central bore of the Applicant's claimed coupling wherein the inner surface of the Applicant's coupling has a tapered portion. This means that the tapered surface is not parallel to the longitudinal axis. The layer of deformable material is against the tapered portion. This means that the layer is also not parallel. This may be seen in Fig. 2 of the Applicant's drawings, for example.

As a consequence, the Applicant respectfully submits that Bronner fails to disclose a fundamental claimed aspect in the Applicant's solicited claims wherein the housing has an inner surface with a tapered portion and a layer of deformable material is on at least a part of the tapered portion of the inner surface. Inasmuch as §102 requires that all claimed features must explicitly or implicitly be present in the prior art, the Applicant respectfully submits that Bronner fails to disclose all claimed aspects. Thus, Bronner is inapplicable to all of Claims 17-31.

In light of the foregoing, the Applicant respectfully submits that the entire Application is now in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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